

FORGIVENESS MADE EASY

NO. 1448

A SERMON
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“Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.”
Ephesians 4:32.

THE heathen moralists, when they wished to teach virtue, could not point to the example of their gods, for, according to their mythologists, the gods were a compound of every imaginable, and I had almost said, unimaginable vice. Many of the classic deities surpassed the worst of men in their crimes. They were as much greater in iniquity as they were supposed to be superior in power. It is an ill day for a people when their gods are worse than themselves. The blessed purity of our holy faith is conspicuous, not only in its precepts, but in the character of the God whom it reveals. There is no excellence which we can propose but we can see it brightly shining in the Lord our God. There is no line of conduct in which a believer should excel but we can point to Christ Jesus our Lord and Master as the pattern of it. In the highest places of the Christian faith, you have the highest virtue, and unto God our Father and the Lord Jesus be the highest praise. We can urge you to the tenderest spirit of forgiveness by pointing to God who, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven you. What nobler motive can you require for forgiving one another? With such high examples, brethren, what manner of people ought we to be? We have sometimes heard of men who were better than their religion, but that is quite impossible with us, we can never, in spirit or in act, rise to the sublime elevation of our divine religion. We should constantly be rising above ourselves and above the most gracious of our fellow Christians, and yet above us we shall still behold our God and Savior. We may go from strength to strength in thoughts of goodness and duties of piety, but Jesus is higher still, and evermore we must be looking up to Him as we climb the sacred hill of grace.

At this time we wish to speak a little concerning the duties of love and forgiveness, and here we note, at once, that the apostle sets before us the example of God Himself. Upon that bright example we shall spend most of our time, but I hope not quite so much as to forget the practical part, which is so much needed in these days by certain unforgiving spirits who nevertheless assume the Christian name. The theme of God’s forgiving love is so fascinating that we may linger awhile, and a long while too, upon that bright example of forgiveness which God has set before us, but from it all I hope we shall be gathering grace by which to forgive others even to seventy times seven.

We shall take the text, word by word, and so we shall obtain the clearest divisions.

I. The first words to think about are, “FOR CHRIST’S SAKE.” We use these words very often, but probably we have never thought of their force, and even at this time we cannot bring forth the whole of their meaning. Let us touch thereon with thoughtfulness, praying the good Spirit to instruct us. “*For Christ’s sake.*” All the good things which God has bestowed upon us have come to us, “for Christ’s sake.” But especially the forgiveness of our sins has come, “for Christ’s sake.” This is the plain assertion of the text. What does it mean? It means, surely, first, *for the sake of the great atonement which Christ has offered.* The great God can, as a just Lawgiver and King, readily pass by our offenses because of the expiation for sin which Christ has offered. If sin were merely a personal affront toward God, we have abundant evidence that He would be ready enough to pass it by without exacting vengeance, but it is a great deal more than that. Those who view it as a mere personal affront against God are but very shallow thinkers. Sin is an attack upon the moral government of God. It undermines the foundations of society and if permitted to have its way, it would reduce everything to anarchy and even destroy the governing power and Ruler Himself. God has a great realm to govern, not merely of men that dwell on the face of the earth, but beneath His sway there are angels, principalities, powers and we do not know how many worlds of intelligent beings. It would certainly be a monstrous thing to suppose that God has made yonder myriads of worlds that we see sparkling in the sky at night without having placed some living creatures in them. It is far more reasonable to suppose that this earth is an altogether insignificant speck in

the divine dominion, a mere province in the boundless empire of the King of kings. Now, this world having rebelled against God high-handedly, as it has done, unless there were a satisfaction demanded for its rebellion, would be a tolerated assault upon the dominion of the great Judge of all, and a lowering of His royal influence over all His domain. If sin in man's case were left unpunished it would soon be known through myriads of worlds. And in fact, by ten thousand times ten thousand races of creatures that they might sin with impunity, if one race had done so, why not all the rest? This would be a proclamation of universal license to rebel. It would probably be the worst calamity that could happen—that any sin should go unpunished by the supreme Judge. Sometimes in a state, unless the lawgiver executes the law against the murderer, life will be in peril, and everything will become insecure, and therefore it becomes mercy to write the death warrant. So is it with God in reference to this world of sinners. It is His very love as well as His holiness and His justice which, if I may use such a term, compels Him to severity of judgment so that sin cannot and must not be blotted out till atonement has been presented. There must first of all be a sacrifice for sin, which, mark you, the great Father, to show His love, Himself supplies, for it is His own Son who is given to die. And so the Father Himself supplies the ransom through His Son, that Son being also one with Himself by bonds of essential unity, mysterious but most intense. If God demands the penalty in justice, He Himself supplies it in love. 'Tis a wondrous mystery, this mystery of the way of salvation by an atoning sacrifice, but this much is clear, that now God for Christ's sake has forgiven us, because satisfaction has been made to the injured honor of the divine government, and justice is satisfied. I want you to consider for a moment how readily God may now blot out sin since Christ has died. The blotting out of sin seems hard till we see the cross, and then it appears easy enough. I have looked at sin till it seemed to blind me with its horror, and I said to myself, "This damned spot can never be washed out, no fuller's soap can change its hue, sooner might the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots. O sin, you deep, eternal evil, what can remove you?" And then I have seen the Son of God dying on the cross, and read the anguish of His soul, and heard the cries which showed the torment of His spirit when God His Father had forsaken Him, and it has seemed to me as if the blotting out of sin were the easiest thing under heaven. When I have seen Jesus die I have not been able to understand how any sin could be difficult to remove. Let a man stand on Calvary and look on Him whom he has pierced, and believe and accept the atonement made, and it becomes the simplest thing possible that his debt should be discharged now that it is paid, that his freedom should be given now that the ransom is found, and that he should be no longer under condemnation, since the guilt that condemned him has been carried away by his great Substitute and Lord. It is because of what Jesus Christ has suffered in our place that God for Christ's sake has forgiven us.

The second rendering of the text would be this, that, God has forgiven us *because of the representative character of Christ*. It should never be forgotten that we originally fell by a representative. Adam stood for us and he was our federal head. We did not fall personally at the first, but in our representative. Had he kept the conditions of the covenant, we would have stood through him, but, inasmuch as he fell, we fell in him. I pray you do not quibble at the arrangement, because *there* lay the hope of our race. The angels probably fell individually, one by one, and hence they fell irretrievably—there was no restoring them. But as we fell in one Adam, there remained the possibility of our rising in another Adam. And therefore in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son Jesus Christ, born of a woman, made under the law to become the second Adam. He undertook to remove our burdens and to fulfill the conditions of our restoration. According to the covenant He must appear in our nature and that nature in the fullness of time He assumed. He must bear the penalty, and that He has done in His personal suffering and death. He must obey the law, and that He has done to the utmost. And now Christ Jesus, having borne the penalty and fulfilled the law, is Himself justified before God, and stands forth before God as the representative of all that are in Him. God for Christ's sake has accepted us in Him, has forgiven us in Him, and looks upon us with infinite and changeless love in Him. This is how all our blessings come to us—in and through Christ Jesus. And if we are indeed in Him, the Lord does not only forgive us our sin, but He bestows upon us the boundless riches of His grace in Him. In fact, He treats us as He would treat His Son. He deals with us as He would deal with Jesus. Oh, how pleasant to think that when the just God looks upon us, it is through the reconciling medium, He views us through the Mediator. We sometimes sing a hymn which says—

“Him and then the sinner see,

Look through Jesus' wounds on me,"

and this is just what the Lord does. He counts us just, for the sake of our Savior's atonement, and because of His representative character.

Now go a little further. When we read, "for Christ's sake," it surely means *for the deep love which the Father bears Him*. My brethren, can you guess a little of the love which the Father has toward the Only-begotten? We cannot pry into the wondrous mystery of the eternal filiation of the Son of God lest we are blinded by excess of light, but this we know, that they are one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the union which exists between them is intense beyond conception. "The Father loves the Son," was always true and is true now. But how deeply, how intensely He loves the Son, no mind can conceive. Now, Brethren, the Lord will do great things for the sake of a Son whom He loves as He loves Jesus, for in addition to the fact of His eternally loving Him, as being one with Him by nature and essence, there is now the superadded cause of love arising out of what the Lord Jesus has done as the servant of the Father. Remember that our Lord Jesus has been obedient to His Father's will—obedient to death, even to the death of the cross, therefore God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above every name. One of the sweetest thoughts, to my mind, which I sometimes suck at when I am alone, is this—that *God the Father will do anything for Christ*. Here is also another piece of a honeycomb—*when I can plead Christ's name I am sure to win my suit of Him*. "For Christ's sake" is a plea that always touches the heart of the great God. Prove that for you to receive such-and-such a blessing will glorify Christ, and the Father cannot withhold it, for it is His delight to honor Jesus. We speak after the manner of men, of course, and on such a theme as this we must be careful, but still we can only speak as men, being only men. It is the joy of the Father to express His love to His Son. Throughout all ages they have had fellowship, one with another. They have always been one in all their designs. They have never differed upon any point, and cannot differ. And you notice when our Lord says, "Father, glorify Your Son," He is so knit with the Father that He adds, "that Your Son may also glorify You." Their mutual love is inconceivably great, and therefore, brethren, God will do anything for Jesus. God will forgive us for Christ's sake. Yes, He has done so in the case of thousands around me. And you, big black sinner, if you will go to God at this moment and say, "Lord, I cannot ask You to forgive me for my own sake, but do it out of love for Your dear Son," He will do it, for He will do anything for the sake of Jesus. If you are at this time conscious of sin so as to despair of yourself, it is well that you should be so, for self-despair is only common sense, since there is nothing in yourself upon which you can rely. But do catch at this hope—it is not a straw, it is a good substantial life-buoy—if you can ask forgiveness for the sake of Jesus, God will do anything for Jesus, and He will do anything for you for His dear sake.

So we read our text once more in the light of a truth which grows out of the love of God, namely, that *God does forgive sin for the sake of glorifying Christ*. Christ took the shame that He might magnify His Father, and now His Father delights to magnify Him by blotting out the sin. If you can prove that any gift to you would reflect glory upon Christ, you may depend upon it you will have it. If there is anything under heaven that would make Christ more illustrious, the Father would not spare it for a moment. If you see that for you to have your sin forgiven would raise the fame of the Savior, go and plead that argument with God, and you shall surely prevail. Will it not make Christ glad if He saves such a sinner as you are? Then go with this argument in your mouth, "Father, glorify Your Son by exalting Him as a glorious Savior in saving me." I find this often a great lever at a dead lift—to say unto the Lord, "Lord, You know the straits I am in. You know how undeserving I am. You know what a poor, undone creature I am before You. But if Your dear Son shall help and save me, the very angels will stand and wonder at His mighty grace. And so *it will bring glory to Him*, therefore I entreat You be gracious to me." You can be certain to prevail if you can plead that it will glorify Christ, and surely you would not wish to have a thing that would not glorify Him. Your prayer shall always be prevalent, if your heart is in such a state that you are willing to have or not to have, according as it will honor your Lord. If it will not glorify Christ, be more than content to do without the choicest earthly good. But be you doubly grateful when the gift that is granted tends to bring honor to the ever dear and worshipful name of Jesus. "For Christ's sake." They are precious words, dwell upon them, and lay up this sentence in the archives of your memory—the Father will do anything for the sake of Jesus Christ His Son.

II. Now, secondly, we pass on to observe what it is which we are told in the text has been done for us, and to us, for Christ's sake. "*God for Christ's sake HAS FORGIVEN YOU.*"

First notice, that He has done this *certainly*. The apostle does not say he hopes so, but he says, "God for Christ's sake *has* forgiven you." Are you in the number of the forgiven, my dear hearer? Have you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Then, as sure as you have believed, God for Christ's sake *has* forgiven you. Have you put your trust in the atoning sacrifice? Then God for Christ's sake *has* forgiven you. You have not begun to be a Christian, I hope, with the idea that one day, at some future period, you may obtain forgiveness. No. "God for Christ's sake *has* forgiven you." Pardon is not a prize to be run for, but a blessing received at the first step of the race. If you have believed in Jesus your sin has all gone—all gone, all your sin has been erased from the records of the past, never to be mentioned against you forever. The moment a sinner looks to Christ, the burden of his sin rolls from off his shoulders never to return. If Christ has washed you (and He has if you have believed in Him), then you are clean every whit and before the Lord you stand delivered from every trace of guilt. Pardon is not a matter of hope, but a matter of fact. Expectation looks for many a blessing, but pardon is a realized favor which faith holds in her hand even now. If Christ took your load, your load cannot remain on your own back, if Christ paid your debts, then they do not stand in God's books against you. How can they? It stands to reason that if your Substitute has taken your sin and put it away, your sin lays no more on you. God for Christ's sake has forgiven you. Get hold of that grand truth, and hold it, though all the devils in hell roar at you. Grasp it as with a hand of steel. Grip it as for life. "God for Christ's sake has forgiven *me*"—may each one of us be able to say that. We shall not feel the divine sweetness and force of the text unless we can make a personal matter of it by the Holy Spirit.

Then notice that God has forgiven us *continuously*. He not only forgave us at the first all our sins, but He continues daily to forgive, for the act of forgiveness is a continuous one. I have sometimes heard it said that we were so forgiven when we first believed that there is no need to ask for further forgiveness. To which I reply—We were so completely forgiven when we first believed that we ought continually to ask for the perpetuity of that one far-reaching act, that the Lord may continue to exert towards us that fullness of forgiving grace which absolved us perfectly at the first, that we may continue to walk before Him with a sense of that complete forgiveness, clear and unquestioned. I know I was forgiven when first I believed in Christ. And I am equally sure of it now. The one absolution continues to ring in my ears like joyous bells which never cease. Pardon once given continues to be given. When, through doubt and anxiety I was not sure of my pardon, yet it was still true, for he that believes on Him is not condemned, even though he may write bitter things against himself. Beloved friend, catch hold of that, and do not let it go. Divine pardon is a continuous act.

And this forgiveness on God's part was *most free*. We did nothing to obtain it by merit, and we brought nothing with which to purchase it. He forgave us for Christ's sake, not for anything that we had done. True, we did repent and did believe, but repentance and faith He gave us, so that He did not forgive us for the sake of them, but purely of His own dear love, because He delights in mercy, and is never more like Himself than when He passes by transgression, iniquity, and sin.

Remember, also, that He forgave us *fully*. It was not here and there a sin that He blotted out, but the whole horrible list and catalog of our offenses He destroyed at once. The substitution of our Lord has finished that matter even to perfection—

*"Because the sinless Savior died,
My sinful soul is counted free,
For God, the Just, is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me."*

All our transgressions are swept away at once, carried off as by a flood and so completely removed from us that no guilty trace of them remains. They are all gone! O you believers, think of this, for the all is no little thing, sins against a holy God, sins against His loving Son, sins against gospel as well as against law, sins against man as well as against God, sins of the body as well as sins of the mind, sins as numerous as the sands on the sea shore, and as great as the sea itself—all, all are removed from us as far as the east is from the west. All this evil was rolled into one great mass, and laid upon Jesus, and having borne it all He has made an end of it forever. When the Lord forgave us He forgave us the whole debt. He did not take the bill and say, "I strike out this item and that," but the pen went through it all—PAID. It was a receipt in full of all demands. Jesus took the handwriting which was against us and nailed it to His cross,

to show before the entire universe that its power to condemn us had ceased forever. We have in Him a full forgiveness.

And let it be remembered that this forgiveness which God has given us for Christ's sake is an *eternal* forgiveness. He will never rake up our past offenses and a second time, impute them. He will not find us on an evil day and say, "I have had great patience with you, but now I will deal with you after your sins." Far from it, he that believes in Jesus has everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation. Irreversible is the pardon of heaven. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He never repents what He has given or forgiven. 'Tis done, 'tis done forever: Jehovah absolves and the sentence stands fast forever. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns?" Blessed be God for eternal pardon!

And since I could not find a word to finish with but this one, I will use it. He has *divinely* pardoned us. There is such a truth, reality, and emphasis in the pardon of God as you can never find in the pardon of man. For though a man should forgive all you have done against him, if you have treated him very badly, yet it is more than you could expect that he should quite *forget* it, but the Lord says, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more forever." If a man has played you false, although you have forgiven him, you are not likely to trust him again. It is an old proverb, "Never ride a broken-knee'd horse." And it is not a bad proverb, either. But see how the Lord deals with His people. When Peter was set on his legs again he was a broken-knee'd horse enough, and yet see how gloriously the Lord rode that charger on the day of Pentecost. Did He not go forth conquering and to conquer? The Lord lets by-gones be by-gones so completely that He trusts pardoned souls with His secrets, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," and He entrusts some of us with His choicest treasures, for Paul said, "He has put me in trust with the gospel, though I was a blasphemer." He commits to our keeping that priceless case which encloses the best hope of men, namely, the gospel of Jesus. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," this shows how perfect is our forgiveness—no, I must put it, how *divine* is the forgiveness which we have received. Let us rejoice in that grand promise which comes to us by the mouth of Jeremiah of old, "In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none. And the sins of Judah and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Here is annihilation—the only annihilation I know of—the absolute annihilation of sin through the pardon which the Lord gives to His people. Let us sing it as though it was a choice hymn—"The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none."

III. Now, if you have drunk into the spirit of our subject, you will be strengthened to hear what I have to say to you upon a point of practice. "FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, *even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.*" Let me say at the commencement that I do not know of anyone here present who has fallen out with anybody else, and therefore I shall make no personal allusions. If I did know of quarrels and bickering it is very likely that I should talk about the same, but I do not happen to know of any, and if therefore, my remarks should come home, I would earnestly beg each one so affected to believe that what I say is intended for him or her, and to receive it as a pointed, personal message from God.

"Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." Now observe how the apostle puts it. Does he say "forgiving another"? No, that is not the text, if you look at it. It is "forgiving, *one another.*" One another! Ah, then that means that if you have to forgive today, it is very likely that you will yourself need to be forgiven tomorrow, for it is "forgiving *one another.*" It is turn and turn about, a mutual operation, a co-operative service. In fact, it is a joint-stock business of mutual forgiveness, and members of Christian churches should take large shares in this concern. "Forgiving one another." You forgive me and I forgive you, and we forgive them, and they forgive us, and so a circle of unlimited forbearance and love goes round the world. There is something wrong about me that needs to be forgiven by my brother, but there is also something wrong about my brother which needs to be forgiven by me, and this is what the apostle means—that we are all of us mutually to be exercising the sacred art and mystery of forgiving one another. If we always did this we should not endure those who have a special faculty for spying out faults. There are some who, whatever church they are in, always bring an ill report of it. I have heard this sort of thing from many—"There is no love among Christians at all." I will tell you the character of the gentleman who makes that observation. He is both unloving

and unlovely, and so he is out of the track of the pilgrims of love. Another cries, "There is no sincerity in the world now." That man is a hypocrite, you can be quite sure of that. Judge a bird by its song, and a man by his utterance. The censorious measure our corn, but they use their own bushels. You may know very well what a man is by what he says of others. It is a gauge of character which very seldom will deceive you, to judge other men by their own judgment of their fellows. Their speech betrays their heart. Show me your tongue, sir! Now I know whether you are sick or well. He that speaks with an ill tongue of his neighbor has an ill heart, rest assured of that. Let us begin our Christian career with the full assurance that we shall have a great deal to forgive in other people, but that there will be a great deal more to be forgiven in ourselves, and let us set our account upon having to exercise gentleness, and needing its exercise from others, "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you."

Note again. When we forgive, it is a poor and humble business compared with God's forgiving us, because we are only forgiving one another, that is, forgiving fellow servants, whereas when God forgives us it is the Judge of all the earth forgiving, not His fellows, but His rebel subjects, guilty of treason against His majesty. For God to forgive is something great, for us to forgive, though some think it great, should be regarded as a very small matter.

Then reflect upon the matter to be forgiven. Our Lord in His parable tells us that the fellow servant owed a few pence, but the servant himself owed his master a fortune. What we owe to God is infinite, but what our fellow creature owes us is a very small sum. What did he do, which has so much offended you? "He said a very shameful thing about me." It was very bad of him, no doubt. "Then he played me a very nasty trick, and acted very ungraciously. In fact, he behaved scandalously, and if you hear the story you will be quite indignant." Well, I am indignant. He is a bad fellow, there is no doubt about it, *and so are you*. So were you certainly when you first came to God, bad as your friend is to you, you have been much worse to the Lord. I will guarantee that his blacks towards you are whites compared with your blacks in the presence of God. "Oh, but you would not believe how basely he acted." No, and I dare say I should hardly believe it if I heard how base you have been to the Lord. At any rate, it should make our eyes fill with tears to think how we have grieved our God, and vexed His Spirit. Some of us have had, so much manifest forgiveness, so much outward sin forgiven, that for us to forgive ought to be as natural as to open our hands. After such forgiveness as the Lord has bestowed on some of us, we would be wicked servants indeed if we were to take our brother by the throat and say, "Pay me what you owe." We would deserve to be given over to the tormentors by our angry Master if we did not count it joy to pass by a brother's fault.

If anyone here who is a Christian finds a difficulty in forgiveness, I am going to give him three words which will help him wonderfully. I would put them into the good man's mouth. I gave them to you just now, and prayed you to get the sweetness of them. Here they are again! "*For Christ's sake.*" Cannot you forgive an offender on that ground? Ah, the girl has acted very shamefully, and you, her father, have said some strong things, but I beg you to forgive her for Christ's sake. Cannot you do it with that motive? It is true your son has behaved very wrongly, and nothing hurts a father's heart more than the wicked conduct of a son. You did in a fit of anger say a very stern thing, and deny him your house forever. I entreat you to eat your words up for Christ's sake. Sometimes when I have been pleading a case like that, the person I have been persuading has kindly said, "I will do it for you, sir." I have said, "I will thank you if you will do it at all, but I would rather you have said you would do it for my Master, for what a blessed Master He has been to you! Do it for His sake." I may be speaking very plainly home to some of you. I hope I am. If there are any of you who have got into a bad state of heart and have said you will never forgive a rebellious son, do not say so again till you have looked at the matter, for Christ's sake. Not for the boy's sake, not for your neighbor's sake who has offended you, not for any other reason, do I urge you to mercy, but for Christ's sake. Come, you two brothers, who have fallen out, love each other for Christ's sake. Come, you two sisters, come you two friends who have been alienated, get together directly, and end all your ill feeling for Christ's sake. You must not keep a drop of malice in your soul, for Christ's sake. Oh charming words, how they melt us, and as they melt they seem to leave no trace of anger behind them, for Christ's sake our love suffers long and never fails.

I do not know how to put this next word I am going to say. It is a paradox. You must forgive or you cannot be saved, at the same time you must not do it from compulsion, you must do it freely. There is a way of carrying this into practice, though I cannot explain it in words. You must forgive, not because

you are forced to, but because you heartily do it. Remember, it is of no use for you to put your money into that offering box as you go out unless you remember first to forgive your brother. God will not accept the gifts, prayers, or praises of an unrelenting heart. Though you leave all your substance to His cause, He will not accept a penny of it if you die in an unforgiving temper. There is no grace where there is no willingness to overlook faults. John says, "He that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" The very prayer that teaches you to ask for mercy bids you say, "Forgive us, as we forgive our debtors." Unless you have forgiven others, you read your own death warrant when you repeat the Lord's prayer.

Finally, I want to say to you all, brethren, that as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, if we are to forgive one another, there must be some other things which we ought to do. And the first is, do not let us provoke each other to offend. If I know that a man does not like a certain thing, I will not thrust it in his way. Do not say, "Well, but if he is short-tempered, I cannot help it. He should not be so ready to take offense. I cannot be always paying deference to his absurd sensitiveness." No. But, brother, your friend is very ready to take offense, and you know that he is, have respect, then, to his infirmity of temper, such as you would have if he were afflicted in body. If you have rheumatism or gout, your friends do not go stamping across the room and saying, "He ought not to mind that. He ought not to feel it." Kind-hearted people step across the floor with a light step, for fear they should hurt the poor suffering limb. If a man has a diseased mind and is very irritable, treat him gently, pity his infirmity and do not irritate him. A friend wrote me a short while ago a letter of serious complaint against a brother who had been very angry with him, and had spoken very sharply while excited to passion. I felt bound to hear the other side of the story, and I was obliged to say, "Now, you two brothers are both wrong. You, my brother, lost your temper, but you, my other brother, irritated him, so that I do not wonder he lost his temper. And when you saw he had lost his temper, why did you not go away, or do something to quiet him? No, but you remained to increase the wrath, and then wrote to expose him." I blame the wood for burning, but what shall I say of the bellows? It was wrong to blaze, but was it right to fan the flame? Very often when a man is angry he may not be the only one to blame. Therefore, brothers and sisters, if we are to forgive each other, do not let us provoke each other to offend.

In the next place, do not make offenses. Oftentimes a man has been offended at another for no reason at all. One person has said of another as he passed him in the street, "He will not even nod to me. He is too proud to acknowledge me, because I am a poor man." Now, that beloved friend who was thus blamed could not see much further than his hand, for he was nearsighted. Another has been censured for not hearing, though he was deaf, and another for not shaking hands when his arm was crippled. Do not imagine offenses where they are not intended.

Next, do not take offenses where they are intended. It is a splendid thing if you will not be offended. Nothing makes a man feel as small as when you accept what he intended for an insult as if it were a compliment, and thank him for it. Can you master yourself to that point?

Remember, when you have conquered yourself, you have conquered the world. You have overcome everybody when you have so fully overcome your own spirit that you remain content with that which naturally would excite your wrath.

Then, if you must be offended, dear brother, do not exaggerate an offense. Some good *women*, I was about to say, and *men* also, when they come as tale-bearers with a charge, make a great many flourishes and additions. They go a long way around, and they bring innumerable beliefs, and suggestions, and hints and hearsays into the business, until a sparrow's egg becomes as huge as ever was laid by an ostrich. I begin coolly to strip off the feathers and the paint, and I say, "Now, I do not see what that point had to do with it, or what that remark has in it. All I can see when I come to look at the bare fact is such-and-such, and that was not much, was it?" "Oh, but there was more intended." Do not believe that, dear brother, dear sister. If there must be something wrong, let it be as little as you can. If you have a telescope, look through the large hole and minify instead of magnifying, or, better still, do not look at it at all. A blind eye is often the best eye a man can have. And a deaf ear is better, by far, than one which hears too much. "Also take no heed," says Solomon, "unto all words that are spoken, lest you hear your servant curse you." Something you have done may irritate a servant, and he may make remarks which are unbecoming and impertinent. Don't hear what he is muttering. Keep out of hearing. He will be sorry tomorrow, and if he thinks you did not hear him he will continue in your service and be faithful to you.

What would *you* do if *your* master picked you up for every word, and if he caught up every sentence that you uttered? How would you live at all if he reckoned sharply with you? No, dear friends, as you have to forgive one another, do not take offense, and when offense is given do not exaggerate it, and if you can, do not even observe it.

Then, again, do not publish offenses. There has been something very offensive said. What then? Do not repeat it. Do not go first to one, and then to another, and say, “Now this is quite private, and mind you keep it a secret. So-and-so has spoken shamefully.” Better, that you should let your heart break, than go up and down with a firebrand in this fashion. If a brother has done wrong why should you do wrong? You will be doing wrong if you publish his fault. Remember how the curse came upon Noah’s son for exposing his father? And how much better it is for us all when there is anything wrong to go backward and cover it, without even looking at it ourselves, if we can help it. Cover it up. Cover it up. Charity covers a multitude of sins. Not only one, two, three sins will charity cover, but she carries a cloak which covers a whole host of faults.

Above all, my brethren, and with this I close, never in any way, directly or indirectly, avenge yourselves. For any fault that is ever done to you, the Master says unto you—resist not evil. In all things bend, bow, yield, and submit.” “If you tread on a worm it will turn,” says somebody. And is a worm *your* example? Christ shall be mine. It is a shocking thing when a Christian man forgets his Lord to find an excuse for himself among the poor creatures under his feet. But if it must be so, what does a worm do when it turns? When you have stepped on a worm, does it bite? Does the worm hurt anyone? Ah, no. It has turned, but it has turned in its agony and writhed before you, that is all. You may do that, if you must. Brother, the most splendid vengeance you can ever have is to do good to them that do you evil, and to speak well of them that speak ill of you. They will be ashamed to look at you. They will never hurt you again if they see that you cannot be provoked unless it is to greater love and larger kindness. This ought to be the mark of Christians. Not, “I will have the law on you,” or, “I will avenge myself,” but “I will bear and forbear even to the end.” “Vengeance is mine. I will repay it, says the Lord.” Do not take that into your hand which God says belongs to Him, but as He for Christ’s sake has forgiven you, so also forgive all those who do you wrong. “How long am I to do that?” says one. “I would not mind doing it three or four times.” There was one of old who would go the length of six or seven, but Jesus Christ said, “Unto seventy times seven.” That is a very considerable number. You may count whether you have yet reached that amount, and if you have you will now be glad to begin again, still forgiving, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you. God help us to be patient to the end. Though I have not just now been preaching Christ Jesus as the object of the sinner’s trust, yet remember that He must also be the object of our imitation. This is the kind of doctrine which Christ Himself preached, and therefore, since He preached continually this love to our neighbor, and forgiveness of our enemies, we ought both to preach and to practice it. Go and believe in Him, and be imitators of Him, remembering that He forgave His murderers upon the cross whereon He worked out our redemption. May His Spirit rest upon you always. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EPHESIANS 4.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—621, 566, 559.**

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